

ENDING TESTING COULD HALT SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, STUDY SAYS
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The elimination of nuclear weapons testing could be a major step toward ending the worldwide spread of the weapons, concludes a study by the Council on Foreign Relations.

The study was released Thursday by the private group amidst a public debate between the United States and the Soviet Union on whether to work for a ban on atomic tests.

At least five nations now possess nuclear weapons, while a sixth, India, tested a single bomb 12 years ago. Still other countries are believed to be working toward obtaining the weapons.

The study said, "A comprehensive test ban treaty could make a significant contribution to containing proliferation."

If a country doesn't now have the weapons, the study said, "abstinence from testing would mean that they could not demonstrate the achievement of a nuclear explosive capability or have full confidence that they had achieved it."

But the three-year study did not specifically call for the two superpowers to negotiate a total ban.

The report's authors included Gerard C. Smith, former negotiator of the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation) I treaty; retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, a former national security adviser; and James Schlesinger, a former defense secretary and CIA director.

Open-air testing was banned by a treaty in 1963. Since then, the superpowers have both conducted an average of about 15 underground tests a year, even though they pledged to work toward eliminating such experiments.

Last weekend, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev again called for a complete test ban. But President Reagan, renewing his contention that tests are needed to make sure the U.S. arsenal is effective, rejected the proposal.

Last summer, Gorbachev announced he was halting Soviet tests and invited the United States to join while the two sides worked out a treaty. U.S. officials rejected the move as propaganda and said the Soviets made it only because they had finished their latest round of tests.

The United States exploded its last test March 22. Reagan has renewed his invitation to the Soviets to view U.S. tests and to monitor new methods for verifying compliance. Administration officials say that without strict verification procedures, the Soviets might cheat.

The council's study, as have similar past reviews, noted that the spread of nuclear weapons has been far slower than forecast in the early 1960s, when there were predictions that 20 to 25 nations might develop atomic weapons within the next quarter-century.

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